



Frequently Asked Questions About Attendance

Attendance

Every minute of a child's time at school is important. Children who are absent for even one day, or who arrive later than their classmates, miss valuable instruction time and can easily fall behind in school. They also miss important socialization time and fun with their peers.

When a student is absent from school it results in a loss of funding for our District. The State of California does not reimburse school districts for days students are absent. For 2010-2011, Berkeley Unified School District lost over \$2,000,000 in unearned income due to absences.

What do I do if my child is absent from school?

Call your child's school office or the specific school's absence reporting hotline each day the child is absent giving your name, the child's name, and the reason for the absence.

Why do I have to report my child's absence?

The Education Code of the State of California requires attendance in school under compulsory attendance laws. "Each person between the ages of 6 and 18 is subject to compulsory full-time education." (EC 48200). If you report your child's absence within a reasonable amount of time you child will be given the opportunity to complete assignments and tests given during the period of absence.

What is an excused and unexcused absence?

Excused Absences

Under California Education Code section 48205, a pupil shall be excused from school when the absence is:

1. Due to the student's illness.
2. Due to quarantine by a county or city health officer.
3. Due to a medical doctor's appointment.
4. Attendance at a funeral of an immediate family member (1 day if in California, up to 3 days if out of state).
5. Jury duty
6. Due to the illness or medical appointment of a child of whom the student is the custodial parent.

Justifiable personal reasons including (but not limited to):

- a. religious holidays or celebrations,
- b. appearance in court,
- c. attendance at a funeral,
- d. attendance at an employment conference (requires previous approval by the school principal), or
- f. working at an election precinct.

All students absent from school under any of the above stated reasons are entitled to complete all assignments and tests missed during the period of absence. Completion must be within a reasonable period of time and shall be given full credit.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences are those absences that do not meet the above listed criteria. An unexcused absence may be either an unverified absence (i.e. when a student “cuts” school) or a verified unexcused absence that occurs with the approval of the parent or guardian, without a prearranged agreement with a school administrator. For example, missing school due to a family vacation is considered an unexcused absence.

Do I need a doctor’s note to verify an absence for illness?

A doctor’s note helps verify an excused absence and shall be required if excessive absences due to illness have previously occurred (BUSD Board Policy 5113).

What happens if my child misses school?

Most children and youth are absent from school at one time or another when they are sick. However, the State of California defines a student as truant after he/she has three unexcused absences and/or has missed more than 30 minutes of school without a valid excuse. Your child’s school is required to send you a truancy letter if your child has three unexcused absences and/or has missed more than 30 minutes of school without a valid excuse within one school year.

What can be done to motivate my teen to attend school and not miss class?

“Truancy is not the problem—it’s an indicator of other problems. When students aren’t in school, we need to understand why they stay away before we can effect solutions.” (School Attendance Improvement Handbook, CDE, 2000.) It is important, for parents and school personnel alike, to get to the root of the problem. Understanding that truancy is an *indicator* is a first step in approaching the problem.

What happens if my child misses school due to a family trip?

The District does not support the practice of taking trips/vacations on school days; absences due to family trips are unexcused. In extraordinary instances, where an emergency situation exists (i.e. a parent requires medical treatment that must be done at a facility in another state and will require a prolonged stay), short-term independent study may be approved by the school principal on a case-by-case basis.

More information about attendance and truancy is available on our website at:

<http://www.berkeleyschools.net/departments/student-services/attendance-and-truancy/>